

The pitfalls of self absorption.
 The violations generated by ego.
 Torah insight derived from juxtaposition.
 Why leaders trust themselves more than God.

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| Detroit | 4:47 | Philadelphia | 4:21 |
| Houston | 5:05 | Phoenix | 5:04 |
| Jerusalem | 4:18 | Pittsburgh | 4:40 |
| Johannesburg | 6:21 | Seattle | 4:08 |
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Weekly Parsha

Vayishlach

RABBI BERNIE FOX

“And Yaakov asked and said,
 “Tell me your name.” And he said,
 “Why do you ask my name?” And
 he blessed him there.”
 (Beresheit 32:30)

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Weekly Parsha

*And
 Justice
 for all?*



MOSHE ABARBANEL

In this weeks parsha Dina is kidnapped and raped. Shechem, the rapist, and his father approach Dina's father Yaakov and her brothers and propose marriage. What is so improper about this offer? We see elsewhere in the Torah that if a single woman is raped; the rapist must marry her, pay a dowry and can never divorce her (Deuteronomy 22:28-29). Her brothers decide to answer the perpetrator Shechem, and his father with guile: “only on this condition will we acquiesce to you: if you become like us by letting every male among you become circumcised.” (Genesis 34:15) In other

(continued on page 5)

Psychology



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In proving that Noachides are prohibited from practicing witchcraft in addition to their other commands, Talmud Sanhedrin (59b-60a) cites Rabbi Shimon citing two Torah verses:

“A witch, one shall not let live. All who lie [perform sexual activities] with animals must certainly be killed”. (Exod. 22:17,18)

The derivation is that since the two verses form a single section (parsha) in the Torah, the two commands must be linked.

That link being that since a Noachide is prohibited in sexual deviations, and this verse immediately follows the prohibition to perform witchcraft, therefore, the Noachide is also prohibited in witchcraft. Connected verses in the Torah provide lessons. This makes sense. But we wonder at these two verses. What commonality exists between witchcraft and bestiality, as opposed to others sexual violations? And why is it specifically witchcraft that God chooses to link to bestiality, as opposed to fortunetellers, superstitions, idolatry and all other false, idolatrous beliefs?

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(Vayishlach cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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Yaakov awaits his encounter with Esav. During the night he battles with a man. Our Sages explain that this man is an angel representing Esav. The angel cannot overcome Yaakov. He strikes Yaakov and dislodges his hip. The man asks Yaakov to release him. Yaakov insists that the angel first bless him. Yaakov then asks the angel to reveal his name. The angel responds that Yaakov has no need for this information. The man blesses Yaakov and is released.

Sefer HaChinuch explains that this encounter communicated a prophetic message. Yaakov's descendants will experience exile. They will be persecuted by the descendants of Esav. Esav's descendants will at times hurt the Jewish people. This is represented by the dislocating of Yaakov's hip. However, they will not overcome Bnai Yisrael. Ultimately Yaakov's descendants will triumph, just as Yaakov overcame Esav's angle.[1]

Nachmanides agrees with Sefer HaChinuch's interpretation of this encounter. He also explains additional elements of the incident. One issue Nachmanides discusses is the dialogue in our passage. What was Yaakov's objective in seeking the angel's name? Why did the angel withhold this information?

He explains that the angel told Yaakov that he had no use for this knowledge. Only Hashem can provide salvation to Yaakov and his children. If they call to this angel for help, he will not respond.[2]

Nachmanides comments are enigmatic. What help did Yaakov hope to secure from the angel? Did Yaakov actually believe that there is a refuge other than the Almighty?

Based on Sefer HaChinuch and Nachmanides' interpretation of this event, we can understand these comments. Yaakov received a prophecy describing the future suffering of his descendants at the hand of Esav. He asked this angel to reveal his name. What is the meaning of this request? What does the name of the angel represent? In the Torah names are sometimes more than mere appellations. In some instances, an entity's name describes its nature.[3] In our case, the name denotes the nature of the angel. Yaakov was asking the angel to reveal its nature. Yaakov wanted to understand the reasons and causes for Esav's persecution of the Jewish people. What are the reasons for this hatred? How can Bnai Yisrael manipulate events to protect itself? These were the secrets Yaakov sought.

The angel understood Yaakov's intention. He realized that Yaakov hoped to rescue his descen-

dants from suffering. The angel responded that Yaakov's plan cannot succeed. The fate of Bnai Yisrael solely rests in the hands of the Almighty. Esav is merely Hashem's tool. His descendants can only turn to Hashem for salvation. They will not succeed in saving themselves through diplomacy or other manipulations.

This interpretation of Nachmanides' position explains another odd comment. In the beginning of the parasha, Nachmanides explains that Yaakov's encounter with Esav provides a model for future dealings with Esav's descendants. We should study Yaakov's strategy and apply it in our own times.[4] Later, Nachmanides comments that Yaakov made one error in his dealings with Esav. He should not have alerted Esav to his approach. Instead, he should have quietly returned to his father's home. He should not have contacted Esav. Through sending messengers to Esav, Yaakov awoke his



brother's jealousy and hatred. Nachmanides further comments that the same error was repeated by the second Jewish commonwealth. Through entering into diplomatic relations with the Roman Empire, the nation embarked on the road leading to Roman conquest.[5]

Nachmanides comments may be true in retrospect. Perhaps, looking back in history we can identify the beginning of the fall of the second commonwealth. However, it seems unfair to criticize the leaders of that time for their decision to develop relations with the Roman Empire.

Similarly, it seems overly critical to fault Yaakov for contacting Esav. Perhaps, Yaakov precipitated the confrontation with Esav. However, he could not know this! Based on the facts available he made the best decision!

We can answer these questions based upon Nachmanides' interpretation of the dialogue between Yaakov and the angel. In that dialogue the angel explained to Yaakov that even the most well-considered plans would not save the Jewish nation from persecution. Only the Almighty can provide salvation. Nachmanides' analysis of Yaakov's error in greeting Esav and the fall of the second commonwealth illustrate this concept. In both cases sound judgment dictated initiating contact with a potential enemy. In both cases this sound judgment did not produce the desired outcome. Yaakov awoke Esav's jealousy. The second commonwealth entered into a disastrous relationship. Nachmanides is not criticizing. He is illustrating the limits of our abilities to control our fate.

(continued on next page)

“And Esav ran to greet him. And he hugged him. And he fell upon his neck and he kissed him. And they cried.” (Bereshit 33:4)

Yaakov and Esav finally meet. Yaakov succeeds in appeasing Esav. Our pasuk describes Esav's response to Yaakov. Esav hugs and kisses his brother.

In the actual text a series of dots appear over the term “and he kissed him.” It is generally agreed that these points indicate a secondary meaning within the phrase. There is a controversy as to the secondary meaning of the pasuk. Rashi offers two explanations. He comments that some Sages suggest that the notation indicates that the kiss was not completely sincere. Other Sages argue that Esav was genuine. However, the notation tells us that this behavior was exceptional and temporary. In general, Esav's hatred of Yaakov remained undiminished.[6]

It seems that both opinions agree that the dots alert us to a need to qualify the overt message of the passage. They only differ on the specific qualification intended. But how do the points transmit the message that a qualification is needed? Gershonides provides a fascinating response to this question. He explains that dots were traditionally used by scribes to identify words to be erased. For example, if a scribe would find a mistake in a document, he would indicate the error with a series of dots. Later the scribe would erase the mistake. Now the message of the dots is clearer. The term associated with the dots must be understood as in the passage and not in the passage. In other words, we must qualify the meaning of the term.[7]

The example of our pasuk serves to illustrate Gershonides' interpretation. The term “and he kissed him” is accompanied by dots. This means that the Esav did not kiss Yaakov in the fullest sense. Something was lacking from Esav's expression of love. It remains for the Sages only to determine the specific quality that was lacking.

“And Yaakov said to Shimon and Leyve, “You have stained me through making me despicable to the people of the land – the Canaanites and the Prezites. And my people are few in number. And they will gather against me and strike me and destroy me and my household.” (Bereshit 34:30)

The prince Shechem kidnaps Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov. He loves Dinah and wishes to make her his wife. Yaakov's sons devise a plan to rescue Dinah. They tell Shechem and his father Chamor that they cannot allow Dinah to marry an uncircumcised man. However if Shechem, Chamor and their people will agree to



circumcise then they can join with the children of Yaakov as a single people.

Shechem, Chamor and their people accept this arrangement. The people circumcise. While they are recovering from the procedure, Shimon and Leyve enter the town, kill all of the men and rescue Dinah.

In our pasuk, Yaakov condemns the actions of his sons. He sons defend their behavior. They argue that they could not allow their sister to be treated as a prostitute. This dispute is difficult to understand. Yaakov was present when the brothers presented their proposal of circumcision. He certainly knew that circumcision would not change the moral character of Shechem, Chamor and their people. He must have suspected that the brothers had some hidden plan. Yet, when this plan was executed Yaakov protested! What was his dispute between Yaakov and his sons?

Sforno explains that Yaakov and his sons never assumed that the Shechem and Chamor would agree to circumcision. They also assumed that even should they accept this condition, they would never convince their people to undergo circumcision. They hoped that Shechem and Chamor would recognize that they could not meet the condition. They would return Dinah.[8]

Shechem, Chamor and their people surprised Yaakov and his sons. They accepted circumcision. Now, Yaakov and his sons were confronted with a dilemma. They were faced with two options. They could allow Dinah to stay with Shechem. This was an outcome they had not anticipated. Alternatively, they could attempt to rescue Dinah.

We can now begin to understand Yaakov's reaction to the behavior of Shimon and Leyve. Yaakov and his sons felt that it would be tragic to give Dinah to Shechem. They had never expected this outcome. However, at this point Yaakov and his sons were faced with the conse-

quences of the bargain. Yaakov maintained that they must accept these unfortunate results and give Dinah to Shechem in marriage.

We can now understand the dispute between Yaakov and his sons. According to Sforno Yaakov made two points. He argued that Shimon and Leyve had endangered all of Bnai Yisrael. They were a minority group in the land of Canaan. The other people of the land would identify with the Shechem, Chamor and their people. They would seek to avenge this wrong committed by Bnai Yisrael. Yaakov and his children could not defend themselves from such an attack.

However, this was not Yaakov's whole argument. Yaakov and his sons had violated their bargain. This disturbed Yaakov. The people of Canaan would conclude that Yaakov and his sons were dishonest. This would reflect poorly on their morality and ultimately on Hashem.

What was the response of Shimon and Leyve? According to Sforno, they disputed both of Yaakov's arguments. They maintained that the people of Canaan were not so immoral as to condone the behavior of Shechem. They would recognize the right of Yaakov and his sons to rescue Dinah. Finally, they would understand the necessity of using subterfuge. Shechem, Chamor and their people outnumbered Yaakov and his sons. They could not rescue their sister without first disabling her captors. Bnai Yisrael would not be condemned for acting unethically. Neither were they in danger of retribution.[9] ■

[1] Rav Ahron HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 3.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Bereshit 32:30.

[3] See Sefer Shemot 3:13 and 6:3.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Bereshit, Introduction to Parshat VaYishlach.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Bereshit 32:4.

[6] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Bereshit 33:4.

[7] Rabbaynu Leyve ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Bereshit, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), pp. 126 and 200.

[8] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Bereshit, 34:13.

[9] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Bereshit, 34:30-31.

(Me continued from page 1)

The Medrash states that Adam had intercourse with all the animals, but “Adam could not find a mate”. (Gen. 2:20) Of course this is not literal. But what is the lesson? God as well said, “It is not good that man is alone”. (ibid 18) What did God mean?

The Medrash teaches that man sought a partner. However, man’s partner is not simply one that gratifies sexual needs. That is why Adam was dissatisfied with the animals. He didn’t literally have intercourse with all animals: this is impossible. But it means to say that Adam recognized an essential component was missing in the animal kingdom. That component was the psychological identification with another. Animals do not possess a Tzelem Elokim – a soul. This is necessary for man’s attachment to, and enjoyment with his partner.

What does this teach us about one who performs bestiality? It is clear: one desires the sexual gratification alone, without the element of identification, companionship or procreation. Such a deviant seeks to pleasure himself, and no one else. He is abnormal, as he does not seek a union with another human being. The self is the focus. It is all about “me”. Part of the sexual act is man’s appeal to pleasure his partner. This satisfies man psychologically, and it is a healthy emotion. But this deviant has only himself as his sole focus. Bestiality is thereby different than all other sexual deviations, as all others include two human partners. The sexual act is not limited to one person. Let us now understand witchcraft.

What exactly is witchcraft, and how does it differ from all other idolatrous practices? Well, in the base act of idolatry, one assumes a powerless object (stone, metal, animals, etc.) to possess powers. The idolater prays or serves the idol, awaiting a positive result. A necromancer assumes he or she has contact with the dead, but it is the dead person who offers power or knowledge. The same is true of fortunetellers: they say that certain times or fortuitous. And those who follow superstitions assume objects or events to be causal, when in fact they are unrelated to the anticipated outcome. Molech is also an assumed power outside the self. In all these cases, one assumes powers to exist. But the witch is different. The witch or warlock boasts powers to be possessed by them. As a witch or warlock, “I” claim to be the cause of future events. “I” possess powers to alter nature.

We now see the unique parallel that exists between bestiality, and witchcraft. In both



*441 prisoners freed this week
from Israeli prisons*

cases, the “me” is the focus. In bestiality, the deviant sees only the self. He or she seeks gratification for the self, and no other. Witches and warlocks as well live a life where their sense of reality is centered on whatever they fantasize to be true. In both cases, the deviant person suffers from an egomania, in which, he or she creates a reality around their sensual and psychological needs, and assumes this is their objective, and real human existence. They do not examine true reality to determine what is truth. Their sole focus is dictated by the unobscured value on the self, over all else. And when someone lives a life where reality is dictated by ego, God is mutually excluded to a severe degree. So focused on the self are these two personalities, that their lives are no longer justified. Both must be killed. And they are not killed for idolatrous or sexual violations per se, but for the corruption of the soul that is generated by such an attachment to the self. I thank my brother Brett for this keen insight today.

Maimonides teaches that one must seek a life where one is equidistant from both poles in all emotional spectrums. One must not be greedy, or a spendthrift...but generous to a point. One must not be a glutton or fast at all times, but enjoy food moderately, and when in need. But when it comes to ego, Maimonides teaches that one must never cave into that emotion, but always refrain and be humble. Maimonides teaches that the ego plays no role in our serving God. One who follows the ego to this degree is not living as God desires, and opposes the purpose of human life, where we are to recognize God, and not the self.

This insight, I find most unique, for it further defines two prohibitions in the categories of idolatry and sexual prohibitions,

normally viewed as just other deviations of the ‘same kind’. It unveils a new facet of human nature. And with this recognition, we may now detect other Torah violations committed because we tend to view the “me” as the sole authority. Of course, falling pray to the “me emotion” is not always met with death. Or maybe, it is...

This week, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert freed 441 prisoners. And as DEBKAFfile REPORTED, “Overriding IDF and Shin Bet objections, Olmert approves arming Palestinian West Bank forces with 50 Russian APCs, 1000 rifles and 2 million bullets.” (Nov. 21)

Whether the freed prisoners had blood on their hands or not will not save the potential victims these enemies might kill. Following his own views, Olmert endangers Israel and Israelis. Had he followed God’s teachings, he would not seek the world’s accolades, but he would succumb to Torah counsel: absolute truths authored by the Creator. Unfortunately, Israel continues its self-destructive path, ignoring God, when we have so many proven, historical cases where God defended us when we followed Him. Chanukah is around the corner, and all that is recalled are the pretty lights, and not the crucial lesson of upholding Torah and fighting wars based on God’s rules. Those brave Jews did not rely on miracles, nor should we. But we should be convinced of what our history teaches: without Torah, our lives are meaningless. Olmert too sadly carries on a distortion of this lesson, as he – without Torah – also proves Israeli lives are meaningless to him. Ironically, if Olmert seeks world approval, he should lead his country based on integrity, and the only true morality: that defined by God. Without God’s teachings, man simply follows his subjective feelings of morality, which must be wrong, and the greater his position, the greater the harm he inflicts.

Human morality breeds mortality. Israeli history has proven this sufficiently.

Anti-Semitism will only find renewed strength in knowing that our homicidal enemies are rewarded with freedom. King David was a leader and warrior led by God’s lessons, not his ego. His calculations and military tactics proved successful, since he followed Torah, truth, and not fantasy. Today, Israel sorely needs a leader led only by his security in the truth of Jewish history and God’s word.

When leaders live by the “me” emotion, they are telling you that “you” are not important. ■

Tand Justice for all?

words, "if you live according to our laws and customs and circumcise your foreskin, then you may marry our sister." The brothers use this tactic in order to capture Dina. Schechem could give one of two possible answers. If he refused then they would retrieve their sister. But if he agreed, they planned on killing him. Schechem's desire to marry Dina was so great that he agrees to circumcise himself and convinces the entire male population of his city to do the same. (Genesis 34:24)

After all the men of his city circumcised themselves, two of Dina's brothers - Simeon and Levi - enter the city, kill the male inhabitants and retrieve their Sister Dina. "And it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Yaakov's son's, Simeon and Levi, Dina's brothers each took his sword and they came upon the city confidently and killed every male. And Hamor and Schechem his son they killed at the point of sword. Then they took Dina from Shechem's house and left." (Genesis 34:25-26) Let us assume that since we are discussing the twelve tribes of Yaakov (Dina's brothers) they were morally and intellectually perfected people, concerning whom we study their deeds and lives in order to learn from. Therefore this leaves me with several questions:

- 1) Is rape a crime for which the perpetrator should be put to death?
- 2) This death punishment seems to contradict the mitzvah in Deuteronomy 22:28-29 previously mentioned. Shechem did offer to marry her.
- 3) What did Schechem's father do wrong, that he was liable for the death penalty?
- 4) What crime did the male inhabitants of the city commit that they too were liable for the death penalty?

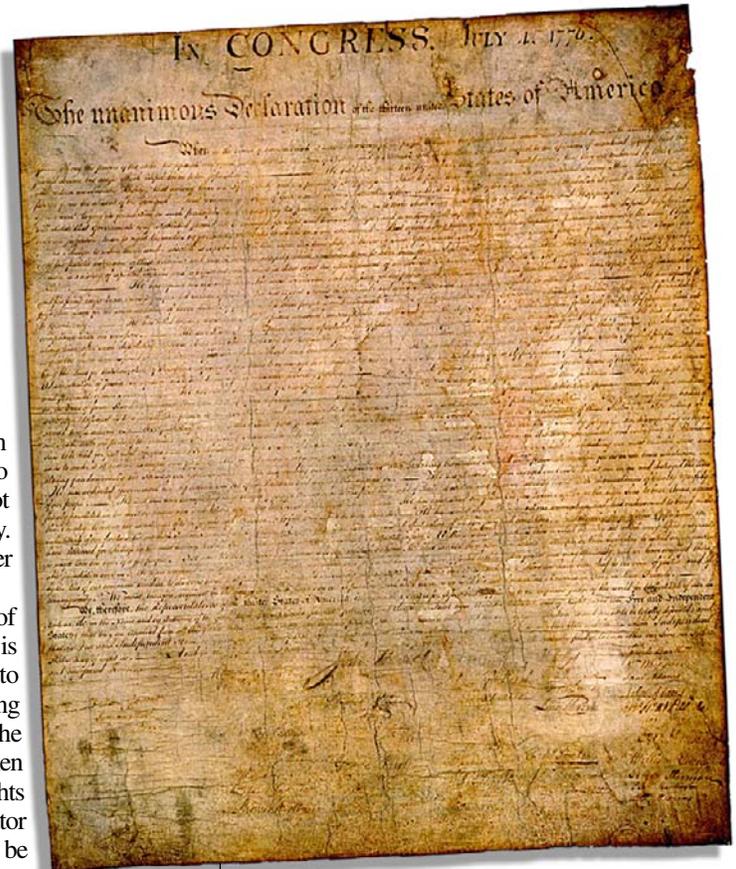
What type of justice is this? Let us consider that Shechem was a Ben Noach, and therefore not obligated to keep all 613 commandments. Therefore, the Israelite mitzvah in Deuteronomy does

not apply. Yet, the problem exists that a Ben Noach who rapes a woman is not obligated to the death penalty. What about Shechem's father and inhabitants of the city?

One of the great benefits of living in the United States is that every citizen is entitled to justice, and no one - including the President - can violate the law. The truth that all men possess unalienable rights granted to him by his Creator and that everyone shall be subject to the law, dates back before our country was created. The founding forefather of the United State studied renaissance thinkers before authoring the following in the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it."

Rambam's Mishna Torah (Shoftim - Judges) Laws of Malachim (Kings:9) discusses at length the seven commandments that a Ben Noach must keep. God commanded six of the laws to Adam the First Man and the seventh he gave to Noah. They are outlined in first law of chapter 9 as follows: idol worship, cursing God, murder, sexual transgressions, stealing, courts system and eating the limb from a live animal. These moral laws are obligated on all non Jews. In particular, the society must maintain justice through a court



system. The 9th chapter law 14 elaborates on the obligation of setting up a court system as follows:

"How are they (the Ben Noach) commanded to establish their court system? They are obligated to establish courts and judges in every local to adjudicate these 6 commands (the 7th is courts) to rule over them. A Ben Noach who violates one of these commands is liable to death by the sword. Because of this, all male inhabitants (of city) of Shechem were put to death because Shechem stole (Dina). They saw and new what he did and did not bring him to justice."

How amazing is this? The Rambam resolves all the questions we asked. Even before the American Declaration of Independence and before the renaissance thinkers, Judaism insisted on a just society ruled by laws. The Torah requires all people in the society from the lowest to the highest be subject to the law. Here in our Parsha the prince in of city Shechem did not obey the law. He stole a person, and refused to return her. The people including his father knew of his treachery and did bring him to justice. How can a just society exist when the leaders are violating the law? Here we see for the first time, a people enforcing justice even upon the Prince of community. ■

Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty

*Presented at the Annual Veterans Day Ceremony
Middle School Veterans Memorial Park
Hicksville, New York
November 11, 2007*

RABBI REUVEN MANN

*Congregation Rinat Yisrael
Plainview, N.Y.*

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have gathered here today to pay tribute to America's fighting men and women, those currently active and veterans of past wars, at a time when the virtues of military service have come under serious challenge. It is sad but important to acknowledge that we are not as patriotic as we used to be – as we ought to be.

Thomas Jefferson said “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty”. Freedom cannot be taken for granted. It doesn't grow on trees. It must be fought for and defended.

This generation of Americans enjoys unprecedented freedom, wealth, luxury, opportunity. Have we forgotten where these benefits came from? Have we forgotten that the founding fathers were motivated by belief in an All Mightily and All Merciful creator who enjoins us to respect the dignity of everyone who was created in His Image?

The Bible in Deuteronomy, Ch. 8, warns about the danger of forgetting the source of all blessings. “Take care lest you forget the Lord your G-d, lest you eat to satiation and build goodly houses and increase your silver, gold, and all your possessions- and then your heart will become haughty and you will forget the Lord and in your heart you will say: “My strength and my might have made for me all the wealth”.

Unfortunately many in this country have been overcome with a spirit of self indulgence and have rejected the spiritual values upon which our nation was founded.

This has bred a sense of complacency and denial about the real dangers that confront America. Let us have the honesty to admit that we ignored the many warning signs such as the bombing of the World Trade Center of 1993, Khobar Towers, and the bombing of the USS Cole which preceded 9/11. Even after the most horrendous attack on American soil a spirit of denial-defeatism and unwillingness to confront the enemy prevails.

Thank G-d we have a president who is determined to protect our country. He has declared an unpopular but necessary war to rid the world of terrorism.

Ladies and gentlemen, this menace is very real. Mohmaud Ahmadinejad boasts that no U.N. sanctions will prevent him from obtaining nuclear weapons which he intends to use against the “twin satans”, Israel and America, Heaven forbid.

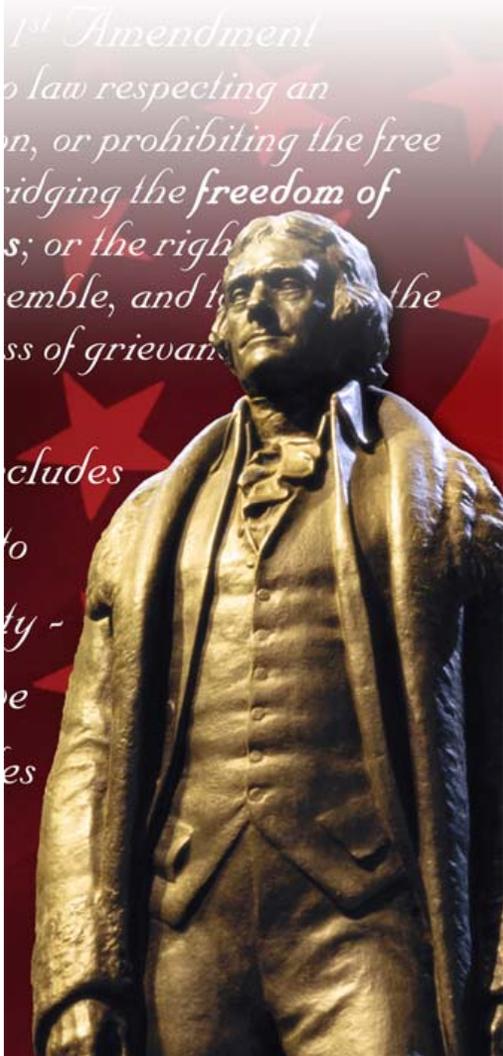
My heart is with our president who recognizes the dangers and has not wavered in the mission despite an unprecedented storm of hatred, ridicule, contempt, and endless criticism. In spite of all the irresponsible pressure to capitulate and precipitously withdraw from Iraq - regardless of the terrible consequences to the national interest and our security President Bush has remained resolutely committed to victory.

My heart is the Commander in Chief and with our courageous warriors- the men and women who have renounced a life of ease and indulgence and motivated by a spirit of idealism and love of what this country stands for have put their lives on the line in far flung batterfields around the world. We have nothing but love and gratitude for our brave troops who have fought magnificently to topple an evil regime and liberate an enslaved people from the claws of a brutal dictator. With the help of G-d and the fortitude of our soldiers the tide is now turning in our favor and a successful conclusion of the mission is now within sight. It is vitally important that we at home support our troops and ther mission and display the same courage – idealism-loylaty to America that they exhibit on the batterfield.

Almighty G-d, Master of the Universe

May Your guidance and protection be with our men and women who are right now in harms way to give them strength and courage to successfully complete the mission in which they have performed so heroically. May they speedily return, in good health to their country, their homes and loved ones.

And let us say Amen.. ■





the Master of Politics

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by student

Chazal say that from parshat Vayishlach, specifically Yaakov's interactions with Eisav, we can learn how to deal with the other nations of the world, and we can gain an understanding of the concepts underlying anti-Semitism. The gemara emphasizes this point by noting that one of the Tanaaim would carefully study this parsha before visiting Rome and meeting with the Caesar. Vayishlach is a parsha of political insight conveying the narrative of Eisav's hatred for Yaakov, carefully describing how Yaakov precisely calculated how to confront his brother's hatred, avoiding contention and potential destruction by the great army of Eisav.

Yaakov was a true master of politics; this is made clear from his dealings with Lavan. Even from the first encounter with Lavan's household, Yaakov demonstrates his political savvy as Vayeitzei 29:12 reads: "Yaakov told Rachel that he was a relative of her father..." whereupon Rashi comments that the Midrashic interpretation of this verse is that Yaakov's implication was: "If he [Lavan] intends to be deceitful then I, too, am his brother in deception..."

In this light let us examine Yaakov's message to Eisav at the beginning of Vayishlach: "Yaakov sent messengers ahead of him to Eisav, his brother, to the and of Seir, to the field of Edom. He commanded them saying, this is what you should say to my master, Eisav. 'Your servant

Yaakov says, with Lavan I lived, and was delayed until now.'" (Vayishlach 32:4-5) Rashi commenting on the words "with Lavan I lived" states that Yaakov was implying to Eisav that he "did not become an officer or anyone of importance but remained solely a transient guest. It is not worthy of you to hate me on account of your father's blessings, 'Be master over your brother for it has not been fulfilled in me..." Rashi is emphasizing the extent to which Yaakov acted to avoid battle with his brother. Yaakov diminished his own stature, allowing Eisav to feel superior, in order to foster peace.

While there is much to be discussed regarding this type of political strategy, surely we can see the logic behind this approach, especially when it comes to saving Jewish lives. What is more difficult to understand is the second interpretation of Rashi regarding the words "with Lavan I lived." Rashi writes: "the gimatria [numerical value] of garti [lived] is 613; as if to say, I have resided with the wicked Lavan and yet have kept the 613 commandments and have not learnt from his wicked deeds." What does Eisav, the wicked, the rejecter of Torah values, care if Yaakov kept the 613 commandments while he lived with Lavan? Furthermore, it seems this message could only antagonize Eisav.

Chazal say, quoting the Rambam in his Igeret Teyman, that the reason the mountain from which the Torah was given was called Sinai, was because from this same mountain came down sinah [hatred] to the other nations of the world. Meaning to say that the very source of the hatred that the other nations harbor toward the Jews is the Torah itself. What then did Yaakov intend to accomplish by implying to Eisav that he kept the Torah, when this very Torah was the source of Eisav's hatred for Yaakov?

Before answering these questions, a psychological principle of hatred must be understood; a distinction must be made between the cause of an individual's hatred, and the action of expressing that hatred. The gemara (Pesachim 48b) tells us that the hatred of an ignorant Jew toward the Torah scholar is greater than the hatred the idolaters have for the Jewish nation. This is indeed a perplexing gemara and must be understood in its own light. For the purposes of our discussion, however, it is interesting to note that these same ignorant Jews, whose hatred for the Torah scholar, according to Chazal, is greater than the hatred of an Eisav for Yaakov, are very often the greatest Torah supporters. The emotion of hate is powerful and complex and is disguises itself in many ways. One part of an individual's psyche may possess great hatred for the Torah scholar while another part of an individual's nature causes him to overcome this hatred and be

the Torah scholar's greatest ally. Thus we see that the cause of an individual's hatred for another person does not translate into that individual acting upon that hatred. The question remains, however, why the expression of hatred might at times remains dormant, kept at bay in the unconscious of the human psyche, and why in other instances hatred will manifest itself in its full assertion.

There is one further principle underlying the emotion of hatred, namely, the aggressive expression of one's hatred toward another person always seeks out a justification from reality. The Koran, which expresses great hatred toward the Jews on numerous occasions, often points out that the Jews transgressed their commandments and are therefore lowly people. Sura 2:63 writes: "And well you know there were those among you that transgressed the Sabbath, and We said to them, 'Be you apes, miserable slinking!' And we made it a punishment exemplary for all the former times and for the latter, and an admonition to such as are God-fearing." The Koran claims that the Jews did not adhere to the tenets of their own law and thus according to their Torah the Jews are despicable people. In this way Mohammed tried to justify the expression of his hatred toward the Jews in the Koran. We can now begin to understand Yaakov's implied message to Eisav. While the source of Eisav's hatred was the Torah itself, this did not mean that Yaakov's adherence to the Torah would antagonize Eisav to destroy Yaakov. As explained, the cause of an individual's hatred does not directly translate into the action of expressing that hatred. Furthermore, by Yaakov's implication to Eisav that he merely lived with Lavan and, rather than learning from his evil ways, that he kept the 613 commandments, Yaakov would not permit Eisav the justification to act upon his anger and destroy Yaakov. Yaakov did not afford Eisav the opportunity to find fault with him and in this way Eisav could in no way assuage his guilt and justify acting upon his hatred toward his brother.

There is an amazing Rashi in support of this idea in Toldos regarding the blessing Yitzchak gave to Eisav. Toldos 27:38-40: "Yitzchak, his [Eisav's] father replied and said to him..... you shall live by your sword, and you shall serve your brother. When you have cause to be grieved, you will throw off his yoke from your neck." And on the words "when you have caused to be grieved," Rashi writes, "... meaning to say, when the Israelites will transgress the Torah and you will have justification to grieve over the blessings which he took, [then] you will throw off his yoke." And so in parshat Vayishlach Yaakov makes it very clear to Eisav, his brother and enemy, that this time had yet to come. ■

Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Letters

Mesora invites your questions, letters in response to articles, your own thoughts, or your suggestions for the JewishTimes.

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Chaim: As Scripture says, "I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me will find Me." (Mishlei 8:17) "But he who avoids Me wrongs himself." (Ibid. 8:36)

Question: Other than not observing the 613 Commandments, what do you think are the most flagrant, unobvious ways man avoids Hashem?

Thank you,

Chaim

Mesora: As we mentioned in "Me", man is convinced that he knows what is best for himself. This conviction is of course a deceit. But when man feels he is correct, he is blinded by his belief: preventing him from ever questioning his error. It is unobvious to him that he is ignorant of truth. But this is in fact what ignorance is. So ignorance leads man to justify his errors.

In its most damaging form, ignorance plays a primary role in the lives of irreligious Jews. Since they do not study, they are ignorant of the reason they were created, and what their obligations are. They may recognize God, but they rationalize their irreligious lives saying, "God knows I am doing what my heart feels is right". However, had they studied God's Torah, they would have come across this very ridicule of Torah violaters, (Deut. 29:18) "I will have peace, for I go in the thoughts of my heart - but his accidental sins will be added to his willful sins." Here, God says this person's accidental sins will be rendered as willful, earning him increased punishment. God rejects this rationalization.

God knows this trick of the heart very well. He included this critique in His Torah, as it is a quite predominant error. Man feels convinced of what

he feels, and then assumes his thoughts dictate reality, when the reverse is true: reality must dictate our thoughts. Scientists do not guess at theories, but experiment time and again until they realize a law is proven. Only then do they accept what they initially theorized, as a truth. Observed reality dictates their beliefs.

But Torah truths span more than just our religious lives. I repeat myself, but Israel as well is as an ignorant child. It fails to accept that God is part of their military equations. All decisions are made based purely on politics and military considerations. The truth of God's promises and Jewish history are ignored. Therefore, Israel dooms itself. Its cowardice, and desire for foreign dollars forces it to make lethal concessions. Freeing 441 prisoners, and not demanding in return the release of our captive soldiers is cowardice again. It shows the world how weak we are. Unlike our current world leaders, King David would have consulted God's Torah before he made any move. He would study the patriarchs and the Prophets.

The bottom line is that man cannot know what true morality is, which would determine whether to free prisoners or other options...if he does not study He who created the true morality.

I hope that very soon, our leaders, President Bush and Prime Minister Olmert will recognize that how we determine the "right" thing to do in war, must start with studying God's messages. And He sent us many in the Torah, Prophets and Writings. Why don't our leaders defer to God's knowledge before their own? The answer is the ego of "Me". ■

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Kidney Needed *(Reprinted from an email list)*

I am writing to appeal to all of you to help me with the following two items. My dad is in desperate need of a kidney transplant and I need everyone's help. One please keep Ephraim be Esther in your tfillot and if you say thillim please keep him in mind. The next item is harder and I am asking your help to post in shul or community email message boards. He needs a kidney donor with type A or O blood for a transplant. If you know of anyone who wants to donate a kidney or have any information at all that could help please contact me asap. The recipient will pay all expenses and lost wages associated with the donation. Please distribute this information as word of mouth is the best networking. I can be reached 24 hours a day by email or at any of the numbers below. Tizku lmitsvos.

–Marc Hoschander

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